REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed November 7, 2001, in the above-referenced application. Claims 17-25, 27-28, and 30-65, as well as new claims 67-88 are pending. New claims 76-88 are presented to complete the record for consideration by the Examiner.

Claims 67, 69, 71, 73, 82, 84, 86, and 87, which depend from Claims 17, 28, 30, 48, 59, 63, 64, and 65, respectively, are directed to an aspect of the invention in which the fiber bundle includes the same number of elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments. Claims 68, 70, 72, 85, and 88, which depend from Claims 17, 28, 30, 63, and 65, respectively, are directed to an aspect of the invention in which individual elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier as compared to one another. Claims 74 and 83, which depend from Claims 48 and 59, state that the weight ratio the elastomeric and non-elastomeric component of the multicomponent fiber is the same. Claims 75-81 are directed to various specific multicomponent fiber configurations. Support for the amendments is found in the application as filed, as discussed in more detail below.

The rejections of record are addressed below in the order presented in the Office Action.

Claim 17-33 are rejected under 35 USC § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner objects to the claim language stating that the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of a non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber. Applicants respectfully submit that the application adequately describes the claimed subject matter in such a way as to reasonably convey to the skilled artisan that the inventors, at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

The present invention is directed to fiber bundles derived from multicomponent fibers, such as illustrated in Figures 1A-1E. Figures 1A-1E demonstrate exemplary multicomponent fibers that include at least two structured polymer components, a first component **6**, comprised of an elastomeric polymer, and a second component **8**, comprised of a non-elastomeric polymer. See page 7, lines 14-18.

The multicomponent fibers are dissociated into a plurality of fine denier filaments or microfilaments, each formed of a different polymer component of the multicomponent precursor fiber. See page 10, lines 29-31; and page 11, line 4, through page 14, line 16. The application describes splitting the multicomponent fiber without removing, for example by solvent dissolution, a portion of the polymer of the multicomponent fiber from which the fiber bundle is derived. Thus the resultant fiber bundle includes a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments and a plurality of non-elastomeric microfilaments that correspond directly to the elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components of the precursor multicomponent fiber. No mass of the non-elastomeric polymer is lost in the splitting process, unlike prior processes that dissolve a fiber component in order to separate out other fiber components from one another.

This is exemplified by Example 1 on page 23, lines 6-17, which describes the production of a multifilament fiber. In Example 1, a multicomponent fiber with 16 segments, 8 of which are polyurethane and 8 of which are polypropylene, is treated so that the polyurethane and polypropylene segments release and microfilaments of the respective polymers formed.

The fundamental factual inquiry is whether the specification conveys with reasonable clarity to those skilled in the art that, as of the filing date sought, Applicants were in possession of the invention as now claimed. An applicant can show possession of the claimed invention by describing the same using words, figures, and other descriptive means. The subject matter of the claim need not be described literally (i.e., using the same terms) in order for the disclosure to satisfy the written description requirement. See MPEP Section 2163.02. The MPEP further notes that an application may be amended to recite a function or property inherently performed by a claimed invention without introducing new matter, even though the application says nothing explicit concerning it. MPEP Section 2163.07(a).

As discussed above, the application as filed describes splitting a multicomponent fiber into its respective components without removing, for example by solvent dissolution, a portion of the polymer of the multicomponent fiber from which the fiber bundle is derived. Thus, it is clear from the application as filed that the inventors were in possession of a fiber bundle in which the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is

substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim 63 is rejected under 35 USC § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner objects to the claim language stating that the split elastomeric and non-elastomeric components can be recombined to cumulatively to define the approximate cross-section of the multicomponent fiber. For the reasons set forth above, however, Applicants respectfully submit that the application adequately describes the claimed subject matter in such a way as to reasonably convey to the skilled artisan that the inventors, at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

In particular, as discussed above, the application describes splitting a multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components into microfilaments corresponding to the components of the precursor fiber. The multicomponent fiber is split under conditions such that the resultant fiber bundle includes microfilaments derived from the multicomponent fiber without removing, for example by solvent dissolution, a portion of the polymer of the multicomponent fiber from which the fiber bundle is derived. Thus, it is clear from the application as filed that the inventors were in possession of a fiber bundle in which the components thereof could be recombined to define the cross-section of the multicomponent fiber from which the microfilaments were derived. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection as well.

Claim 64 is rejected under 35 USC § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner objects to the language stating that the elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments exhibit comparable deniers. Again, Applicants submit that the application as filed contains subject matter so as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the art that the inventors, at the time the application was filed, has possession of the claimed invention.

In particular, the Examiner's attention is directed to Figures 1A-1E, which demonstrate exemplary precursor multicomponent fibers prior to splitting into their respective elastomeric and non-elastomeric components. As discussed above, because the fibers are split in such a manner that does not result in removal of one or the other of the components of the precursor

fiber, the resultant fiber bundle includes microfilaments which correspond to the polymer segments of the multicomponent fiber from which the microfilaments were derived. In addition, the exemplary fiber cross-sections of Figures 1A-1E illustrate fibers in which the respective elastomeric and non-elastomeric components are approximately the same size in cross-section. Thus, the application describes fiber bundles that include microfilaments having comparable deniers to one another. Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of this rejection as well.

Claim 65 is rejected under 35 USC § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner objects to the language that the denier of the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the denier of the multicomponent fiber from which it is derived. For the reasons set forth in more detail above, Applicants respectfully submit that the application as filed adequately describes the claimed subject matter so as to convey to the skilled artisan that the inventors were in possession of the invention at the time the application was filed. Applicants accordingly respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection as well.

Claims 17-27, 30-33, 48-59 and 63-66 are rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. First, the Examiner objects to the term "sufficiently different" defining the solubility differences between the elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymers. Applicants respectfully submit that the application as filed provides guidance to one skilled in the art as to the meaning of this term. In particular, the Examiner's attention is directed to page 9, lines 6-12, which list exemplary differences in solubility parameters.

The Examiner also argues that reference to a yarn comprising a fiber bundle as recited in Claims 26 and 29 is indefinite. To advance prosecution of this matter, Claims 26 and 29 are cancelled.

The Examiner objects to the language "arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments" in Claims 48 and 59. Again, Applicants submit that one skilled in the art would understand the meaning of this term, particularly in view of the specification, for example, at page 7, line 27 through page 8, line 15. However, Claims 48 and 59 are amended to further recite that the distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments are arranged so that the components

are not physically impeded from being separated from one another. See page 7, lines 28-31. Withdrawal of this rejection is accordingly requested as well.

Lastly, the Examiner objects to the phrase "microfilaments exhibit comparable deniers" in Claim 64. Claim 64 is amended to state that elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier. This is supported by the application as filed, as discussed in more detail above. For example, see Figures 1A-1D. Applicants accordingly respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Claims 17-26, 28-33, 48-59 and 63-65 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,663,221 to Makimura et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 17, 28, 30, 63, 64, and 65 are amended to define the relative lengths of the non-elastomeric microfilaments and the elastomeric microfilaments of the claimed fiber bundles. Claims 48 and 56 are similarly amended to define the relative lengths of the elastomeric and non-elastomeric components of the multicomponent fiber. Specifically, as recited in the claims, the non-elastomeric microfilaments are plastically deformed. As a result, as discussed at page 4, lines 13-17, page 11, lines 11-21 and page 11, lines 27-30, the plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments are longer than the elastomeric microfilaments.

Claims 17, 28, 30, 63, 64 and 65 are also amended to define the relative arrangement of the non-elastomeric and elastomeric filaments within the fiber bundle. Specifically, the claims are amended to state that the plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments, which are bulkier than the elastomeric microfilaments, surround and cover from view in the unstretched condition the elastomeric filaments. See page 4, line 22-page 5, line 9; and page 12, line 21-page 13, line 23.

To produce the fiber bundles, the precursor multicomponent fibers are drawn to plastically deform the non-elastomeric component. This increases the length of the non-elastomeric component relative to their undrawn length. This also increases the length of the non-elastomeric components relative to the length of the elastomeric components upon release of the adhesion forces adhering the components to one another.

The multicomponent fiber is then thermally treated under relaxation to release adhesion forces between the elastomeric and non-elastomeric components. The elastic components, which are elastically deformed only, contract, which splits the components of the fibers. The non-elastomeric filaments bulk or bunch up around the elastomeric filaments and substantially surround or cover the same. As a result, the fiber bundle is elastomeric, yet has a pleasant feel due to the bulked non-elastomeric microfilaments covering the surface of the fiber bundle.

The plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments are longer than the elastomeric microfilaments. This also contributes to the bulking of the non-elastomeric microfilaments around the elastomeric microfilaments. Stated differently, because the plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments are longer than the contracted elastomeric microfilaments, the non-elastomeric components must bunch up to span the same end-to-end distance as the contracted elastomeric strands.

The products of Makimura et al. differ structurally from the claimed invention. In this regard, the multicomponent fibers of Makimura et al. include an elastomeric core **1** surrounded by a sheath. The sheath can be a sea-island phase with island **2** of a non-elastic polymer surrounded by a soluble polymer **3**. Alternatively the sheath can be a multilayer laminate phase with the non-elastic polymer and the soluble polymer occurring alternately and radially.

The multicomponent fibers of Makimura et al. are made into fabric and thereafter the soluble polymer is removed by dissolution. Thus Makimura et al. do not produce fiber bundles per se, but rather extract the soluble polymer component from fibers within a fabric network. See, for example, Column 2, lines 55-59 and Column 5, lines 11-13. This is stated to be necessary to avoid the problems associated with weaving, knitting, etc. elastomeric/non-elastomeric fibers.

Makimura et al. states that <u>after</u> the soluble polymer is extracted, the fabric can be caused to shrink. Because the fabric shrinks after separation of the components into their respective fibers, however, the multicomponent fiber cannot form a fiber bundle as claimed. Stated differently, the polymer components are already separated, thus the elastic fibers cannot contract

to shorten the length of the fibers and force the non-elastic fibers to bunch up about and cover the elastic fibers.

Various aspects of the invention are even further removed from the Makimura et al. patent. New Claims 67, 69, 71, 73, 82, 84, 86, and 87, which depend from Claims 17, 28, 30, 48, 59, 63, 64, and 65, respectively, are directed to an aspect of the invention in which the fiber bundle includes the same number of elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, in Figure 1A, which demonstrates an equal number of elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components, which after splitting results in an equal number of elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments.

In contrast, the Makimura et al. patent is directed to composite fibers that include a greater number of non-elastic polymer components as compared to the number of elastomeric polymer components. See Figures 1-3 of Makimura et al. which illustrate composite fibers which include a substantially greater number of non-elastic polymer components **2** as compared to the number of elastomeric polymer components 1. See also column 4, lines 45-56, of Makimura et al. which states that the number of non-elastic fibers is at least five times greater than the number of elastic fibers, otherwise the fabric produced using the same is inferior in softness, of feel and touch. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 67, 69, 71, 73, 82, 84, 86, and 87 are patentable for this reason as well.

Still further, new Claims 68, 70, 72, 85, and 88, which depend from Claims 17, 28, 30, 63, and 65, respectively, are directed to an aspect of the invention in which individual elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier as compared to one another. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, in Figure 1A, which demonstrates similarly sized elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components, which after splitting provide similarly sized elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments. Also, as noted above, Claim 64 is amended to state that the elastomeric microfilaments and the non-elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier as compared to one another. In contrast, the Makimura et al. patent illustrates a fiber bundle in which the denier of the non-elastomeric

filaments **2** vary substantially from the denier of the elastomeric filament **1**. Accordingly Applicants submit that Claims 64, 68, 70, 72, 85, and 88 are patentable for this reason as well.

Claims 48 and 59 are even further removed from the Makimura et al. patent. Claim 48 is directed to a splittable multicomponent fiber prior to dissociation of the components into their respective parts. Claim 48 is amended to clarify that the elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer segments are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments so that the polymer components are not physically impeded from being separated from one another. Claim 48 is also amended to clarify that at least a portion of both the elastomeric component and the non-elastomeric component is exposed to an outer peripheral surface of the fiber. This is the natural result of the components being arranged in unocclusive segments. Claim 59, directed to a fabric which includes the splittable multicomponent fibers, is similarly amended.

In contrast, the fibers of Makimura et al. include elastomeric components **1** and non-elastomeric components **2** as islands within a sea component **3**, formed of a soluble polymer, such as polystyrene. Thus Makimura et al. is directed to multicomponent fibers prior to dissociation which includes elastomeric and non-elastomeric components which are occluded or blocked from splitting from one another. Further, elastomeric component **1** is not exposed to an outer surface of the fiber. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 48 and 59 and the claims dependent thereon are also patentable over Makimura et al.

New Claims 74 and 83, which depend from Claims 48 and 59, are even further removed. These claims state that the weight ratio of the elastomeric component is substantially the same as the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component. See Figure 1A, for example. As discussed above, Makimura et al. is directed to fibers in which the relative size of the elastomeric component is substantially larger than the size of the non-elastomeric components.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection based on Makimura et al.

Claim 66 is rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,405,686 to Kuroda et al. To advance prosecution of this matter and without prejudice or disclaimer to Applicants, Claim 66 is cancelled.

Claims 17-26, 28-33, 48-59, and 63-66 are rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,783,503 to Gillespie. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As discussed above, Claims 17, 28, 30, 63, 64 and 65 are amended to define the relative lengths and arrangement of elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments in the fiber bundles. The microfilaments produced in accordance with the process of the Gillespie et al. patent differ structurally from the claimed fiber bundles. The Gillespie et al. patent states that the multicomponent filaments can split into smaller filaments upon exiting a spinneret in free fall from the spinneret, by drawing and stretching or attenuating the filaments in a pressurized gaseous stream, or by developing a triboelectric charge in at least one of the components. Column 2, line 62 - Column 3, line 2.

In particular, Gillespie et al. describes production of the filaments using spunbonded processes in which the molten polymer is extruded to form fibers, which are attenuated in the molten state to draw down the same and form the resultant spunbonded fiber. Thus, the multicomponent spunbonded filaments of Gillespie et al. are simultaneously formed and attenuated. The fibers are not first formed using melt spinning processes and thereafter stretched so as to plastically deform one but not the other of the components. Rather, because the multicomponent fibers are attenuating during the formation step, all components thereof are subjected to the same forces in the molten state and plastic deformation to extend the end-to-end length of one but not the other components does not occur. As a result, upon splitting, the multicomponent fibers of Gillespie et al. do not include longer components therein and thus cannot form a fiber bundle as claimed in which certain components are bulkier and fuzz around to cover an inner less bulky component.

This is further illustrated by the photographs of various split fibers of Gillespie et al., none of which demonstrate the bulked fiber configuration of a non-elastomeric component surrounding an inner less bulky elastomeric component. Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim 27 is rejected under 35 USC § 103 as unpatentable over Makimura et al. Claim 27 is also rejected under 35 USC § 103 as unpatentable over Gillespie et al. For the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection as well. In particular, as noted above, the fiber bundles as claimed include bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric filaments which substantially surround and cover non-bulked and shorter elastomeric filaments in the center of the fiber bundle. This allows a unique visual effect when the non-elastomeric microfilaments are dyed one color and the elastomeric microfilaments are dyed a different color.

Specifically, the claimed fiber bundle will have a first color in its unstretched condition, imparted thereto by the bulked non-elastomeric filaments surrounding and covering the inner non-bulked elastomeric filaments. When the fiber bundle is stretched, the inner non-bulked elastomeric filaments are exposed, thus changing the color of the fiber bundle in the stretched condition.

Neither Makimura et al. nor Gillespie et al. teach or suggest this bulked fiber configuration, much less providing different components in a fiber bundle with different colors so as to provide this visual effect. Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection as well.

The rejections of record having been addressed in full in the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully solicited. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that she contact the undersigned at her convenience.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required

therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa B. Pendleton

Melissa B. Pendleton
Registration No. 35,459

Customer No. 00826
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
Bank of America Plaza
101 South Tryon Street, Suite 4000
Charlotte, NC 28280-4000
Tel Charlotte Office (704) 444-1000
Fax Charlotte Office (704) 444-1111
CLT01/4532635v1

"Express Mail" Mailing Label Number EL910298787US
Date of Deposit: May 7, 2002

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231, on May 7, 2002.

Grace R. Rippy

Version with Markings to Show Changes Made:

17. (Twice amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments], said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber.

28. (Twice amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric polyurethane microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding said elastomeric polyurethane microfilaments], said elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene components which split upon thermal activation, and the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric polypropylene component within the multicomponent fiber.

30. (Twice amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments], said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber.

48. (Twice amended) A splittable multicomponent fiber comprising:

at least one component comprising an elastomeric polymer, at least a portion of which is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, which is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension; and

at least one component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer, at least a portion of which is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, which is plastically deformed and longer than said elastomeric component upon dissociation therefrom so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension,

wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal treatment and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments so that the polymer components are not physically impeded from being separated from one another.

56. (Amended) The fiber of Claim 48, wherein said fiber is [selected from the group consisting of] a pie/wedge fiber[s, segmented round fibers, segmented oval fibers, segmented rectangular fibers, and segmented ribbon fibers].

59. (Twice amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of splittable multicomponent fibers comprising at least one component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer and at least one component comprising an elastomeric polymer, wherein at least a portion of each of said non-elastomeric and elastomeric polymer components is exposed to the outer peripheral surface of said fiber, wherein said at least one polymer component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer [which] is plastically deformed and longer than said elastomeric component upon dissociation therefrom so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension and wherein said at least one polymer component comprising an elastomeric polymer [which] is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension and release of adhesion to the non-elastomeric component;
wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments so that the polymer components are not physically impeded from being separated from one another.

63. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments], said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber whose cross section consists of contiguous segments of elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently

different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and after separation the elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments can be recombined to cumulatively define the approximate cross section of said multicomponent fiber.

64. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in an unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments], said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein said elastomeric microfilaments have substantially the same denier as said [and] non-elastomeric microfilaments [exhibit comparable deniers].

65. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of bulked plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding and covering from view in n unstretched condition a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments that are shorter than and less bulky than said non-elastomeric microfilaments [and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments], said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter (δ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the denier of said fiber bundle and the denier of said multicomponent fiber are substantially identical.